

# Serving in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Army Spc. Nantena M. Beller, 1-188th ADA SECFOR

**SPIN BULDAK, Afghanistan** - On a hilltop overlooking the Maroof Valley, one squad of the 1-188th ADA SECFOR's second platoon provides security while awaiting the return of another squad out on patrol. Every dust devil in the distance catches the eye in hopes it is being kicked up by the returning vehicles.

The North Dakota Army National Guard's Security Forces unit is providing security along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Currently, one platoon is at Torkham Gate, one working in the Spin Buldak area, and the other is near Jalalabad.

"We work with the Afghanistan National Army, Afghanistan Border Patrol and Afghanistan National Police setting up checkpoints and combined patrols," said Army Staff Sgt. Shawn M. Heck, a squad leader from Bismarck, N.D.

The unit partners with the Afghanistan Military on missions to provide them with training at the same time as giving the civilians stopped representation from their own people, said Army Staff Sgt. Corey W. Askin, who volunteered for this deployment.

First Sgt. Ronald C. Sveum, from McLeod, N.D., said the local population receives the unit with open arms. When passing by in a convoy the greeting is always a wave or a thumbs up.

"We are doing a job that is traditionally active-duty Military Police or Infantry work and we are doing it as well if not better than any active duty unit would," said Askin.

Sveum said, "Be proud of the soldiers from North Dakota. They are showing the regular Army what our state is made of; a work ethic that never quits, discipline and positive attitudes."

The assistance from home is amazing as well. From neighbors helping with farms and ranches to elementary classes sending cards and letters, the whole state is showing its support, said Sveum.

"Continued prayers for safety and calm hearts are needed most," said Askin.

As the vehicles finally roll through the constantina wire and the squads exchange information on that day's happenings, the sun sets on another day in Afghanistan. Leaving behind the knowledge that there is one less day before we are back home with our loved ones.

Sgt. Joshua L. Kramer, from Jamestown, and Spc. Jeffrey J. Craik from St. Thomas, both with the 1-188th ADA SECFOR, inspect an abandoned house in a village near the Pakistan border. The village was near a checkpoint the unit set up with Afghanistan Border Patrol, and was examined for security reasons.



(Above) Spc. Thomas H. Ollenburger, with the 1-188th ADA (SECFOR) from Bismarck, provides security while inside an Afghanistan Border Police compound in Wesch. He is overlooking a bazaar teaming with locals and a Pakistan border crossing point.



(Left) Army Sgt. Seth A. Vinchattle, 188th ADA (SECFOR), cleans his weapon while on a three day mission. Vinchattle, from Bismarck, was recently promoted in Afghanistan.



(Left) Army Sgt. Joshua L. Kramer, 188th ADA (SECFOR), provides security from the turret of his HMMWV. Kramer, from Jamestown, is overlooking a valley that is considered a crossing point for illegal articles entering into Afghanistan from Pakistan.

"Be proud of the Soldiers from North Dakota,"  
First Sgt. Ronald C. Sveum



# Soldier Talk



what is the best care package you've ever received?



**Sgt. 1st Class Daryl Stevahn**  
191st Military Police Company

*"The best CARE packages I ever got were when I was over in Desert Storm. The cookies and treats I got from fiends and relatives were a morale booster. The homemade stuff tasted better than what we got over there."*



**Sgt. Joshua Boehm**  
Det 2. Alpha Company 141st Engineer Combat Battalion

*"The best CARE package I got was in Iraq. It was full of canned goods and beef jerky – beef jerky was the best. There was also a bunch of letters from home. All my relatives dumped them in the package."*



**Spc. Carina Schlecht**  
112th Aviation

*"In basic training, my grandma sent me four dozen cookies, all different kinds, two ten-packs of gum, letters, and a disposable camera. They kept the cookies and gum until graduation, by which time the cookies were stale, but I got to eat the gum."*



**Staff Sgt. Krista Isakson**  
68th Troop Command

*"When I was at basic training, I got some chapstick and some smelly lotion from my mom. There were some cookies in there, but my drill sergeant ate them."*



**Master Sgt. Tom Newton**  
SIDPERS chief

*"In AIT, my mother sent me homemade chocolate chip cookies and candy. She sent enough for me to share the wealth."*

## Receiving or applying for VA disability benefits

The *Straight Arrow* is an authorized publication for members of the North Dakota National Guard.

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You may not collect Veterans Administration disability benefits and be paid for service in the National Guard at the same time (10 USC 12316 and 38 USC 5304(c)). A National Guard service member may elect to waive VA disability benefits and keep the training pay received from the military service department.

The VA benefits must be waived for a number of days equal to the number of days for which training pay is received.

In most instances, it will be to the soldier's and airman's advantage to waive VA benefits and keep training pay. If you fail to act you may accumulate a significant debt to the government which could result in a significant reduction in disability benefits for a period of time.

Most traditional National Guard members are paid for approximately 63 training days during a fiscal year. This consists of 48 armory drills or Unit Training Assemblies (UTA) and 15 days of annual training (AT). If VA benefits are waived, VA will reduce the award based on the amount of disability received for the same number of days you received military pay.

For example, Spc. John receives \$258.12 for a weekend drill (\$64.53 x 4 UTAs). Spc. John has a 30 percent disability rating from VA and receives or is eligible to receive \$337 per month (\$4044/year or approximately \$11.23/day). Spc. John may choose to waive either his National Guard pay of \$258.12 for the drill weekend or he may choose to waive his VA compensation of \$44.92 (\$11.23 times 4) for the same weekend.

If he chooses to waive his VA compensation for the days he spent in National Guard training, VA will withhold his compensation checks in the next year until the amount of

\$707.49 (48 UTA's + 15 days AT = 63 days times \$11.23 daily VA compensation) is reached. In Spc. John's case, this will mean two months without a VA compensation check and a reduced check of \$303.59 for the next month, with a return to \$337 for the rest of the year.

Over the course of a year, SPC John would have earned \$4065.39 from the National Guard for 48 UTAs and 15 days AT. In addition, he would have received VA compensation of \$3336.30 (\$4044 minus the \$707.70 withheld for 63 days of National Guard training pay).

As you can see, it is generally much better financially for the soldier or airman to waive VA disability benefits.

At the end of the fiscal year, VA and the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) will identify individuals receiving both National Guard training pay and VA disability compensation. VA will then notify these soldiers or airman to obtain an election by the individual. The service member is then required to complete VA Form 21-8951-2 which asks for the specific number of days for which he or she received training pay and also to elect which department's pay to waive.

Annual waivers are now required. If the VA does not contact the veteran within a year for the annual waiver, it is recommended that the veteran contact his or her regional VA office. In addition, the North Dakota Army National Guard will institute a Dual Compensation Statement of Understanding to be completed by the soldier and reviewed on an annual basis during date of birth audits.

Please note that compensation payments made by the VA are tax-free and that any duty for the National Guard is reportable and taxable.

If you have questions or concerns about your military benefits, please contact Ms. Marilyn Rohrer, State Benefits Advisor, at 701-333-3303 or email her at [marilyn.rohrer@us.army.mil](mailto:marilyn.rohrer@us.army.mil). Also check out the VA's website at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

## News that affects you





# Forty German soldiers visit ND

Story and photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson,  
Joint Force Headquarters

**BISMARCK, ND** – Forty German Soldiers visited North Dakota May 12-26. They were members of Transport Battalion 380, located in Diez/Lahn, between Frankfurt and Cologne. They came to America as part of the Small Unit Exchange program. Forty Soldiers from the 136<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion, North Dakota Army National Guard, Devils Lake, went to Germany March 12-25.

“Small Unit Exchanges of this magnitude are very valuable. We learned a great deal about each other’s military, in our case specific to the German Reserve, and had a more in depth experience of the German culture, not the tourist version. Equally as important was the training the battalion staff received. Many aspects of what a battalion staff should be able to do were exercised, from S1 (personnel) through S6 (information technology),” said Lt. Col. Jim Hrdlicka, Bismarck, 136<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion Commander. “Probably the most important aspect of this exchange was the friendships that were developed. Given the current world situation, the possibility that U.S. Soldiers and German Soldiers will meet again is ever present. With the knowledge gained and the friendships developed, those encounters will undoubtedly be more positive and mature.”

Lt. Col. Ehrhard Beck, Commander of Transport Battalion 380, said, “We are friends of the U.S.. American-German friendship is important. We welcomed our comrades warmly in Germany and would like to thank those involved in the process. (In North Dakota) every lady and gent, even kids, are friendly, even not knowing us. We want to continue those deep friendships grown between soldiers, between battalions.”

“The Small Unit Exchange concept, besides establishing and improving friendships and relationships, is about interoperability. By training with our counterparts, we work through communication and coordination issues in a non-critical situation,” said Lt. Col. David Schall, Bismarck, Overseas Deployment Training Manager. “The exchange provided realistic training for the unit leadership of both organizations. The exchange challenged each organization’s planning abilities, as well as their abilities to effectively communicate and coordinate their plans to accomplish the exchange.”

The Guard members who visited Germany got a good look at German training and equipment. During their visit to North Dakota, the Germans got an equally well-rounded look at North Dakota’s military. They trained on North Dakota Army National Guard wheeled vehicles, engineer equipment, and quartermaster equipment. They tried out a combat simulator and fired various weapons on the pop-up range at Camp Grafton. They rode helicopters in Bismarck, visited the Air



*As part of a small unit exchange program, forty German Soldiers visited North Dakota May 12-26. First Sgt. Ralf Winter gets a look at Bohn Armory from a Huey.*

Force Bases in Grand Forks and Minot and the Air Guard base in Fargo, and laid a wreath at the Veterans Cemetery in Mandan.

Ralf Franzen, First Sgt. of the 8<sup>th</sup> Company, Transport Battalion 380, said that weapons training was somewhat different here. Germany has stricter noise regulations because of its denser population. They have 80 million people in a space roughly equal to North and South Dakota put together. In Germany, they normally allow fewer shooters on the range at a time, and they need special permission for night firing. He liked our humvees: “We went up a hill so steep, through the windshield we saw only sky, like an aircraft!”

“I think the Small Unit Exchange was a great opportunity to enhance the transatlantic relationship on a personal basis. We had the chance to get to know each other, how the structures are, how the equipment and how the training is. Besides, we had the chance to get to know the people who are on the other side of the Atlantic. How they live, how they think, how they feel. And the most important thing was: We could make these experiences in real life. Not by reading a book or an article in a magazine or by watching a reportage on TV or a movie, but by our own experience,” said Capt. Peter Wolf, Dusseldorf, 2<sup>nd</sup> Company Commander, Transport Battalion 380. “Shooting the American weapons, driving the American vehicles, visiting the different units and getting around in North Dakota was very interesting and a lot of fun. But I am still deeply impressed of the hospitality and the friendship of our American comrades. The Small Unit Exchange was a great time in my life which

I will never forget.”

Staff Sgt. Achim Hölper, Limburg, a squad leader, said, “My home area is much more hilly. In North Dakota you can see already in the morning who is coming for coffee in the afternoon!”

The Germans took time to learn something about American culture. They visited museums in Bismarck and Medora. They toured the Capitol, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and Fort Lincoln. They saw a Native American cultural show in Devils Lake.

“I participated in the exchange to Germany and assisted with several projects during the ND exchange. I enjoyed the trip to Germany very much! It is a wonderful country rich with history, scenery and culture. We were fortunate to be able to see much of the country in the short time we were there and operate many of their weapons systems and vehicles,” said Master Sgt. Derrick Childs, Cando, Operations Sergeant, 136<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion. “In North Dakota we enjoyed showing them the best North Dakota and the North Dakota Army and Air Guard had to offer. They took very good care of us while we were in Germany, and everyone felt very strongly about showing them the same kind of care. What we thought was amazing in Germany, they took as common, and what we take as common, they said was a once in a lifetime experience. For example: riding a horse; shooting a pistol; seeing a buffalo in the wild, not in a zoo; seeing the Badlands scenery; all these and more were amazing to the German soldiers.”

## Ghanaian leaders visit North Dakota

The North Dakota National Guard received special visitors in June. As part of the State Partnership Program, leaders from the Ghanaian Armed Forces (GAF) traveled to North Dakota to learn about the capabilities and functions of the North Dakota National Guard. Six members of the GAF were received by Major General Michael Haugen, the Adjutant General. During their stay here, the Ghanaians were briefed on the North Dakota National Guard force structure. They toured facilities throughout the state such as the Jamestown Armory, Camp Grafton, UND Aviation School, and the 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. The Ghanaians also spent a day receiving a cultural orientation, visiting the North Dakota Heritage Center, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, and Medora. The GAF was also received by the Ft. Totten Nation and entertained with traditional dances. The State Partnership Program is a relationship-building program designed to foster and promote democracy around the world. Future events between North and Ghana include medical and educational exchanges, and other combined military endeavors.



Photo by CW3 Kiel Skager

*Brig. Gen. Kwesi Yankson, Ghana, West Africa, is presented a North Dakota souvenir license plate from Gov. John Hoeven at the state Capitol June 29, 2006. Yankson and selected members of the Ghanaian Armed Forces visited North Dakota as part of the State Partnership Program to learn about the capabilities of the NDNG. They spent five days traveling to various facilities that the NDNG has to offer, and discussed future opportunities for the partnership.*



# Medical unit is alerted for mobilization

Public Affairs Office news release

**BISMARCK** – Gov. John Hoeven and Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen, Adjutant General for the North Dakota National Guard, announced today that approximately 40 Soldiers of the Bismarck based 814<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment were notified of their upcoming mobilization in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit members were notified on Monday and Tuesday, June 19 and 20.

“Providing health care services on a battlefield is extremely important,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen. “The 814<sup>th</sup> has been training for a mission such as this since they were organized in 2004. They have the “can do” spirit to make a difference in the lives of those they come in contact with.” Under current rotation policies for Operation Enduring Freedom, the unit’s Soldiers would serve one year in theater (boots on the ground) and could be on active duty for 18 months to two years.

“Although their mobilization date is later this year, the extra time will be well spent in preparing for their upcoming mission and spending time with their families. Long deployments place a strain on families and employers and giving them more time to prepare is best for everyone,” said Haugen.

The 814th Medical Detachment mission is to provide combat health, medical treatment, and ground ambulance support within a combat area of operation. The unit is relatively new to the North Dakota Army National Guard. It was organized on Sept 1, 2004 and is comprised of primary care physicians, physician assistants, medics, and ambulance drivers. The medics are licensed EMTs.

The 814th Medical Detachment is one of the newest medical units in the Army inventory, designed specifically to address the future warfighting requirements of a transforming military. It is a “modular” unit, and thus able to easily integrate resources with other area support medical units to meet the specific medical requirements of a theater commander.

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on America, the North Dakota National Guard has mobilized over 3,200 Soldiers and Airmen to support the Global War on Terrorism both at home and abroad.

North Dakota Army National Guard units currently alerted and deployed include:

- Company A, 164<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, Minot, currently deployed to Iraq. (122 Soldiers)
- 1-112<sup>th</sup> Command Aviation Battalion (CAB), Bismarck, currently deployed to Bosnia. (23 Soldiers)
- 1-188<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery, Bismarck and Grand Forks, currently deployed to Afghanistan. (191 Soldiers)
- 1-129<sup>th</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Bismarck, currently at Ft. McCoy, WI, with eventual deployment to Central Command Headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, FL. (13 Soldiers)

## Gov. Hoeven visits troops



Submitted photo

**Hoeven visits N.D. troops in Iraq and Kuwait:** Gov. John Hoeven just completed a two day trip to visit North Dakota soldiers stationed in Kuwait and Iraq. Hoeven began his trip on Monday with briefings from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in Washington. He then departed for Iraq with a stop in Kuwait for lunch with active duty troops from North Dakota. Hoeven’s stops in Iraq included meetings with U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad, meetings with military officials in Baghdad and a flight to Balad to visit members of the North Dakota National Guard 164<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. “It was a great honor to be able to visit our soldiers on the front lines and see firsthand the tremendous work that they are doing,” Hoeven said. “These men and women are helping the citizens of Iraq to create a free and democratic society. In doing so, they are also making the world a safer place for all of us.” The Department of Defense (DoD) sponsored trip also included Governors Frank Murkowski of Alaska and Mark Sanford of South Carolina. Details of the trip to Iraq were not announced in advance at the request of the DoD. Currently there are more than 350 members of the North Dakota National Guard in active duty status deployed around the world. Deployed units include the Minot based 164<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion; the Grand Forks based 1-188<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery; the Bismarck based 129<sup>th</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment and 1-112<sup>th</sup> Command Aviation Battalion; and members of the 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing in Fargo.

## Soldiers’ life insurance rates to increase

Effective 1 July 2006, Soldiers will see an increase in the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance and Family Servicemembers Group Life Insurance premium. The rates will automatically increase based on the Mass Rate table change below. This follows the recent rate increase back in December 2005 where Soldiers began paying for the Traumatic Injury Insurance through SGLI.

Coverage Amount	Premium New Rate	Plus T-SGLI
\$50,000	03.50	04.50
100,000	07.00	08.00
150,000	10.50	11.55
200,000	14.00	15.00
250,000	17.50	18.50
300,000	21.00	22.00
350,000	24.50	25.50
400,000	28.00	29.00



New Family SGLI rates:		
Age Group	New Rates 1 Jul 06	Revised rates for \$100,000 coverage
Under 35	.055	\$ 5.50
35-39	.07	\$ 7.00
40-44	.09	\$ 9.00
45-49	.14	\$14.00
50-54	.27	\$27.00
55-59	.40	\$40.00
60 & Up	.52	\$52.00

Additionally, Soldiers deployed in support of OER or OIF will be provided an allowance to cover a portion of the monthly premium for their SGLI and TSGLI. Effective 1 February 2006, these Soldiers will be reimbursed for those premiums up to \$150,000 of coverage to include the \$1 traumatic injury premium. Future updates will be published in the remarks section of the Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). Please review the comments on your LES to ensure the premium changes are correct and reflect your coverage amount. For more information, visit [www.insurance.va.gov](http://www.insurance.va.gov).



# 1-112th holds Aviation Day

Story and photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson,  
Joint Force Headquarters

The 1-112th Command Aviation Battalion held an open house called Aviation Day on June 15 at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Bismarck. There was all kinds of military equipment to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell: helicopters, humvees, trucks, a bridge boat, an armored personnel carrier, tents, weapons, night vision goggles and MREs. There was also face painting, cotton candy, hot dogs, free lanyards, and tours of the facility.

Humvee rides were very popular. Jerry Imus tried one and said, "When John Glenn went up (into orbit), the capsule looked fancy on the outside, but inside it was the bare minimum to make it move. It's the same with everything military."

"The helicopters were the best part," pronounced Nicholas Zuraff, son of Warrant Officer One Russ Zuraff.

"The helicopters were cool," agreed Mark Wiche, of Lincoln.

Nicholas, Mark and many other kids had the chance to climb into a Kiowa, a Huey, and a Blackhawk helicopter, and got to watch helicopters take off and land on the grass close by.

"There were two primary reasons to hold this event," said Major William G. Watson, Executive Officer of the 1-112th and OIC of Aviation Day. "We wanted to enhance community relations, and we wanted to get some recruits. Our goals were 30 leads and 250 visitors. We had over 500 attendance, we met our goal with leads, and we even signed somebody up today."

"The battalion appreciates the way Bismarck-Mandan supports its troops. This is a way to show appreciation back to the community."

Aviation Day was part of the 1-112th's Annual Training. That training included convoys, MOUT, firing on the range at Camp Grafton South, setting up a remote site at Carrington Airfield, and the retirement of Maj. Bob Taylor after 28 years in the military.



Sgt 1st Class D. J. Meberg watches as George Niblick tries out the controls of an OH-58 helicopter.

## 188<sup>th</sup> Army Band appears on CBS Early Show

By Staff Sgt. Mike Hagburg, 188th Army Band

First formation came at dawn on June 23 for the 188<sup>th</sup> Army Band as it assembled at the Fargo Air Museum to appear on the CBS Early Show. CBS weather forecaster Dave Price and his crew were in Fargo on the sixth stop of the Early Show's Great American Vacation tour.

A crowd of hundreds of people started forming at the museum shortly after 5 a.m. in anticipation of the Early Show's 6 a.m. broadcast start. Staff Sgt. Michele Olson, a flute player with the band, did not mind the early hour.

"It was nice to let the rest of America know we have an Army band in North Dakota," Olson said. "It was good to have exposure both to the national audience and to local people."

The band entertained the Air Museum crowd with music, appearing on one network segment of the Early Show and on one segment of Fargo television station KX4's morning program. A youth band from West Fargo also played for the broadcast.

Alto horn player Sgt. Kate Naujokas said it was "neat" to have a chance to show off the 188<sup>th</sup> to all the kids in the Air Museum crowd and to the young West Fargo musicians.

"When I was young I didn't know there was an Army band," Naujokas said. "The event brought the community together."

During the broadcast, band members got a behind the scenes look at the production of the Early Show as they and the rest of the crowd were herded from one side of the museum to the other in order to provide the best backdrop possible for Price. Once the cameras rolled, the band joined the crowd in screaming in response to cue cards.

The Air Museum event came in the midst of a four-day drill "weekend" for the band. The extended drill was scheduled so the band could practice, prepare and pack for its upcoming July 8-25 deployment to Germany. During the drill the band also traveled to Pekin, N.D., marching in a parade and playing a Dixieland concert to help celebrate the town's centennial.

## New plan extends TRICARE benefits

Congress has recently extended health care insurance to traditional members of the reserve components under the TRICARE health plan. Enhanced TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is a newly expanded premium based TRICARE standard health plan with three tiers.

Service members can apply beginning August 1, 2006. Previously, TRS was offered only to reserve component member returning from an active duty tour in support of a contingency operation that lasted for more than 90 days. Under the new policy, all members of the reserve components are eligible to participate in the TRICARE program. Premiums are based on the three tiered qualification system below.

Tier 1: Deployed National Guard or Army Reserve Soldiers

1. Called or ordered to active duty for a period of more than 30 consecutive days in support of a contingency operation on or after September 11, 2001
2. Served continuously on active duty for 90 days or more under that active duty order OR served less than 90 days solely due to an injury, illness or disease incurred or aggravated while deployed.
3. Signs a service agreement within 90 days after release from active duty to serve in the National Guard or Army Reserve

4. Soldier must be a member of the National Guard or Army Reserve on the start date of TRS coverage.

5. Premium Costs: \$81 for Soldier only; \$253 for Soldier and Family.

Tier 2: All National Guard or Army Reserve Soldiers meeting certain eligibility requirements.

1. Must be a member of the National Guard or Army Reserves on the start date of TRS coverage
2. Meets one of the following criteria:
  - a. Eligible for unemployment
  - b. No employer-sponsored health plan
  - c. Self-Employed
3. Qualifies during open season OR submits documentation for a qualifying life event
4. Premium Costs: \$145.29 for Soldier only; \$451.42 for Soldier and Family
  - Initial Launch OPEN SEASON 2006: 01 August – 25 September 2006 will enroll Soldiers and/or families for coverage

from 01 October – 31 December 2006

- Each calendar year thereafter OPEN SEASON: 01 July – 01 Oct

Tier 3: All National Guard or Army Reserve Soldiers

1. Must be a member of National Guard or Army Reserve on the start date of TRS coverage
2. Qualifies during open season OR submits sufficient documentation establishing a qualifying life event
3. Premium Costs: \$247 for Soldier only; \$767.41 for Soldier and Family
  - Initial Launch OPEN SEASON 2006: 01 August – 25 September 2006 will enroll Soldiers and/or families for coverage from 01 October – 31 December 2006
  - Each calendar year thereafter OPEN SEASON: 01 July – 01 October

For more information visit <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/reserveselect> or look for updates through your Family Program Office at <http://www.ndguard.com/family/default.asp?ID=570>.



# Memorial Day salute draws record crowd

By Sgt. Ann Knudson,  
Joint Force Headquarters

The crowd filled the chairs and the bleachers. They stood by the chapel and sat on the grass or on folding chairs. An estimated four thousand came to the Veterans Cemetery for this year's Memorial Day ceremony.

"I think every year it's just fantastic, just beautiful. I wouldn't miss it – such a good job," said Betty Wagy. She was decorating the grave of her brother, SP4 William W. Haider, U.S. Army, a Vietnam veteran.

Master Sgt. Dave Somdahl, North Dakota Air National Guard, opened the ceremony, followed by flyovers by helicopters from the Army National Guard and F-16s from the Air National Guard. Major General Michael Haugen, the Adjutant General, and Governor John Hoeven made brief remarks. The keynote speaker was Brigadier General Jerald L. Engelman, Deputy Adjutant General.

"Liberty is the fallen soldier's eloquent legacy. We gather to celebrate the legacy of service that has protected and insured the survival of the freedoms we enjoy today," said Brgi. Gen. Engelman. "This audience is a vast sea of heroes...heroes who are or who have provided the necessary energy it takes to fuel the service that protects our freedoms."

Several color guards posted the colors, including VFW Post #1326 and the Standing Rock Vietnam Veterans. Miss Allie Moss, third grade, Shiloh Christian School, sang the National Anthem, and Pastor Doug Graham, Evangel Assembly of God, gave a prayer. Andrew Reichenberger and Sasha Bergsagel, Bismarck High School, played Taps in echo on their bugles. The ND National Guard Honor Platoon fired three rifle volleys and a 21 gun cannon salute.

"My favorite part was the jets and the helicopters and the cannons," said David Sokolofsky, age 10 ½, a sixth grader at Mary Stark Elementary. David and his siblings and mother decorated the grave of their uncle and brother-in-law, Sgt. Patrick Gross, U.S. Marine Corps, another Vietnam veteran.

Jerome Ziegler, of Bismarck, decorating the grave of his father, Staff Sgt. Oscar Ziegler, U.S. Army, WWII, said, "I've been coming here since my father passed away. This is one of the treasures that we have in the state."

"I've gone to every one of these (ceremonies) since 1997. This was the most impressive one ever, and the most people. It was a beautiful program, and it's nice to see it (the cemetery) so well taken care of," said L. Ramona Sailer, of Hazen. She accompanied her brother-in-law, Gordon Bertsch, Bowman, in decorating the grave of his wife, Viola Bertsch.



Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson,  
Joint Force Headquarters

*Adrianna, Jacob, David and Samantha Sokolofsky at the grave of their uncle and brother-in-law, Patrick Gross.*



Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson,  
Joint Force Headquarters

*North Dakota National Guard Honor Platoon fires 21 gun cannon salute during the Memorial Day event at the Veterans Cemetery.*

## The Veterans are 'having a ball' and all are welcome to join the fun

On October 7, 2006, The Fargo American Legion is hosting the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Military Appreciation Ball and Benefit. This "black-tie" event is open to the public and is intended as both an opportunity for veterans, current active, guard and reserve military personnel, and civilians to celebrate the accomplishments of our area's military personnel as well as to raise funds for Post 2, American Legion programs, in Fargo.

According to the event chairperson, Maureen Woodbury, "This event is going to be the real deal!" Woodbury hopes the event will entertain 300 plus, in the Patriot Hall Ballroom at the Fargo American Legion. "There will be lots of tradition mixed with food, fun and music," she added. Plans also include a silent auction. Tickets for the event in advance are \$55 for couples and \$30 for single. At the door they are \$60 and \$35. You must be 21 to attend.

Gilbert C. Grafton, Post 2, American Legion has had a strong tradition of giving to the community. Their charitable gaming donations over the years have topped the \$25 million mark and climbing. The post prides itself in continued monthly giving, but they are restricted

from spending those dollars on the post.

The Fargo American Legion is currently undergoing a metamorphosis of sorts. The club at the Legion has enjoyed great success under manager, Mona Arnold. The post has also been raising funds for ongoing capital improvements to their landmark building, downtown.

According to Woodbury, the ball and an upcoming golf tournament chaired by Arnold, are just two more creative ways the post plans to raise funds on an annual basis. The golf tournament is Monday, September 11 (Patriot's Day). "The proceeds from these events are intended to allow us to continue serving the community for years to come," emphasized Woodbury.

Veterans and service personnel are encouraged to watch for future announcements about these events.

For questions concerning the ball, contact Mo Woodbury at 729-7028. For questions concerning the golf tournament, contact Mona Arnold at 293-3930. Additional information is available on the Fargo American Legion's web page at:

[www.tristateveterans.com/fargo legion](http://www.tristateveterans.com/fargo legion).



# In memory of our Soldiers

*Public Affairs Office new release*

Two Soldiers from Alpha Battery of the 1-188<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Security Forces (SECFOR) were killed in action in eastern Afghanistan on June 6. An additional Soldier from the unit was wounded in the attack. They were conducting combat security operations when a roadside explosion, damaged their vehicle.

Sgt. Travis A. Van Zoest, 21, and Spc. Curtis R. Mehrer, 21, both of Bismarck, were killed in action as a result of a improvised explosive device detonating near their vehicle. Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Tim Wicks, 39, also of Bismarck is currently being recovering from his injuries at Walter Reed Medical Center.

The enemy attack happened at approximately midnight CST on June 5, 2006. (Local Afghanistan time was about 9:30 am June 6).

Sgt. Van Zoest is survived by his parents, Sheila Richter, Bismarck, and Bernardus A. Van Zoest, Dane, WI; Terry Richter, step-dad; brother Derrick M. Van Voest; step-brothers Tyler A. Richter and Josh Harris. Sgt. Van Zoest graduated from Century high school in May, 2003 and attended Bismarck State College and Minot State University from 2003 until his deployment.

Spc. Curtis Mehrer is survived by parents Kevin and Joyce Mehrer, Bismarck and his daughter Hailee McCormick, Bismarck and twin brother Alan D. Mehrer, 21, all of Bismarck, N.D.

In a separate incident, Spc. Michael L. Hermanson, 21, Company A, 164 Engineer Battalion (EB), of Fargo, was killed in action as a result of a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) hitting the vehicle he was riding in. He was killed in action in Iraq on Tuesday, May 23. He was participating in a combat patrol mission.

Spc. Hermanson is survived by his parents, Layne and Scharlotta Hermanson and sister Lindsey, all of Fargo. He was a Fargo native and attended Horace Mann elementary, Oak Grove Lutheran school, Ben Franklin Junior high school and is a 2002 graduate of Fargo North high school.

"Our entire National Guard family is extremely distraught at the loss of these magnificent Soldiers. Our sympathies and prayers go out to all of the families for their losses in their time of sadness," said Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen. "We also wish Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Tim Wicks a speedy recovery. We must continue to honor our heroes and always remember their great sacrifices in the name of freedom."



*Sgt. Travis A. Van Zoest*



*Spc. Curtis R. Mehrer*



*Spc. Michael L. Hermanson*

## Chaplain's Corner



### 'I will be at peace'

*"Then Job answered the Lord and said: I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be hindered. I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know. I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you. Therefore I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42: 1 - 6*

**CH (MAJ) Brian Donahue,**  
**142nd Engineer Battalion**

I want to talk with you about war, combat, prosperity and our relationship with God. So many of us, at this point, have been involved in deployments to one degree or another. I will visit with you about the scripture passage above, from my perspective, in hopes you may be able to resonate with this from your own story.

Job experienced much turmoil and suffering, as he saw it, from the hands of God. He did not understand but he accepted it, to a point. After a long period of time Job finally questions the wisdom of God in all of his suffering. God responds with a lengthy list of questions for Job which are way beyond Job's understanding or capability to which to respond. These are questions to which only God could possibly have the answer. In the end God comforts Job because God never expected Job to have the answer. God only wanted Job to understand that God is God and Job is Job, and to humbly accept this. The mystery of God at work in the world amidst joy, happiness, suffering and death is just that, a mystery. Faith gives us glimpses into the providence of God and how all things eventually work to the good and the plan of God. It is through faith that I understand that God is bigger than me and that it is His plan at work in the world, not my plan. I trust that His plan will work in the end. I know that my plan doesn't really stand a chance of success in the long run.

In the midst of peace and joy, war and suffering, there are always questions of what does it all mean. I don't think it really matters if I am in a combat zone or living in prosperity I will still have questions about the meaning of life. I think, in the end, it comes down to some very basic principles of life. These are 1) to live the purpose for which I believe I was created; whatever I understand this to be in my life. 2) to follow the two basic principles of life which were clearly stated in the gospels by the person of Jesus: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments." Matthew 22:34 - 40

I believe that the essence of life really comes down to these principles stated above. If I do my best to live these principles, whether in prosperity or not, I will be better than okay; I will be at peace. I will be at peace even in a combat zone where, at times, love of neighbor means to protect my buddy, alongside me, by whatever means necessary.

### Teens try Extreme Team at Camp Grafton



**Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters**

**Getting a taste of military life at Camp Grafton:** On June 9, Staff Sgt. Melinda Richter-Karaba shows teens and sponsors how the Quartermasters draw water from Lake Coe, clean it up in the Reverse Osmosis Water Purifying Units (ROWPU) in the trailers, and store it in the onionskins. They and their sponsors spent two days at Camp Grafton and Camp Grafton South while the 136th Quartermaster Battalion and the 3662nd Maintenance Company's annual training. The teens watched Soldiers rappell, fly helicopters, purify water and fix engines in the field. They rode humvees and bridge boats, ate MREs, stayed in barracks, and they tried MOUT, night vision goggles and ROPES. Cpt. Mark McEvers said, "It's the first time ever we've done something like this in the Quartermasters. The Extreme Team Lead Generating Event (LGE) was born out of the recruiters' prototype two years ago where a soldier would bring in a prospect or lead. Sgt. 1st Class Dombrowsky got the word out to all recruiters: 'We'll set up the events - you bring them to us.'" "I think the LGE has been very successful. We were able to show them all the highlights, all the things Soldiers like to do. We were hoping for fifteen or twenty and got thirty. It far exceeded our expectations," said Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Berg, 136th Quartermaster Battalion CSM.

## Summer safety

*By Maj. Kurt Fleck, Joint Force Headquarters*

Summer is here, and with the coming of summer fun, are the added risks associated with activities. Remember these safety tips. Driving: Make sure your car is in good working order, limit driver distractions, always wear seatbelts and drive the speed limit. If operating a motorcycle, make sure you have the proper endorsements and experience to ride. In 2004, 3,927 motorcyclists were killed and another 76,000 were injured in traffic crashes in the US. Motorcycle fatalities have increased each year between 1997 and 2004, with a total increase of more than 85%. Half of the victims had a blood alcohol content of .08 or higher. Soldiers and their families are encouraged to take the motorcycle riders course. Beginner and experienced motorcycle training courses will be offered at different locations throughout the state. Water recreation: Never leave children unsupervised in or near a water recreation area. Wear lifejackets while on rivers and lakes. Fires and burns: never leave the stove or outdoor grill unattended, use extreme caution when building a camp fire or burning in general. Make sure you have fire suppression equipment available in case the fire gets out of control, always make sure you put the fire out completely.





What's inside

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Life in the  
desert

*Army Sgt. Robert S. Sanderson, 188th ADA (SEC-FOR) secures the area surrounding an Afghanistan National Army traffic control point. Sanderson is a volunteer from the 132nd Quartermaster Battalion in North Dakota. (See full story on page 1.)*

Photo by Spc. Nantena M. Beller,  
1-188th ADA SECFOR